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INGS+AND+ARROWS



EDWIN+FRANCIS+EDGETT



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SLINGS AND ARROWS

By

EDWIN FRANCIS EDGETT

Illustrated With Sketches

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BOSTON

B. J. BRIMMER COMPANY

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These "Slings and Arrows" are selected from several hundred pieces which have appeared on Wednesdays and Saturdays during the past five years in the Boston Evening Transcript under the general heading of "Masquerades" and other collective titles." The thanks of the author are given to the publishers of the Transcript for permission to reprint them in a book.

TO THE UNGENTLE READER

THESE lines,
And all the lines
That follow,
Are not verse,
Either free or shackled.
They merely masquerade
In the form
Of verse
For the obvious purpose
Of hitting the eye
Of the reader
With the sense
Or nonsense
Of their prose reflections
Upon certain ways
Of masculine and feminine
Humankind.

E. F. E.

OLD BOOKS FOR NEW

THROUGH the streets and bazaars
Of a Far Eastern city
There went one day a Moor
Bearing in a basket
A glittering array of lamps.
And as he walked he cried:
"Oh, who will give
Old lamps for new?"
And all the world followed him
And the street boys pursued him
From place to place,
And mocked at him.
But he cared not for that,
For when he reached
The palace of Ala-ed-Din
He gained the prize he sought,
The Magical Lamp of the Treasure,
In exchange for his tawdry wares.

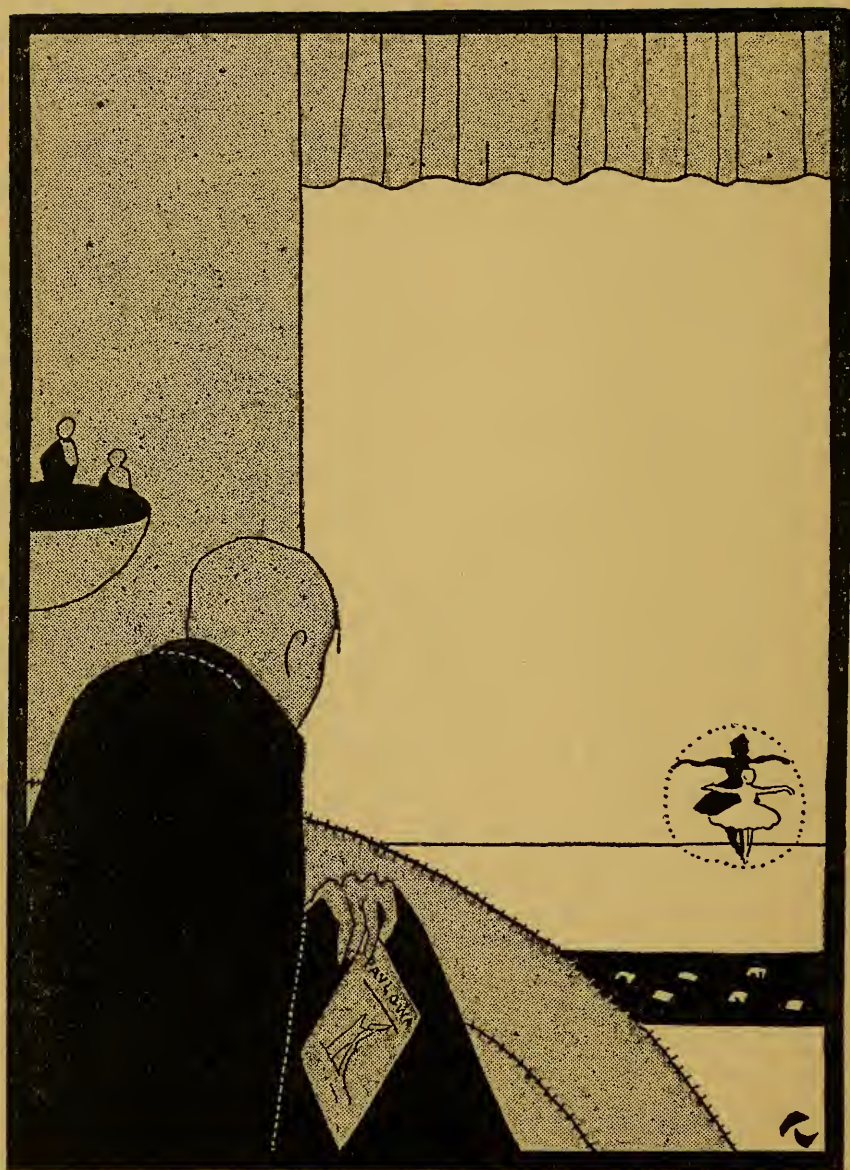
And so today
In Western lands
Great thoughts out of the past
Woven from the magic of men's minds
Are bartered or are cast aside
Whenever we are asked to give
Old books for new.

THE ACROBATIC READER

THE first page
Of the morning newspaper
Offers opportunity
For all sorts
Of mental agility
And physical dexterity
As we read
Each article.
After turning
To page so and so
For its conclusion
In compliance
With each repeated request,
We feel as if
We had performed
An acrobatic feat
Of mind and hands.
Great and wonderful
Is the make-up
Of the morning newspaper.

THE TELEPHONE SHIRKER

HE sits at his ease,
Or his work,
While his secretary
Calls up a victim
On the telephone,
And bids him
Hold the line "a minute."
If he is a man
Of infinite patience,
He holds it
For several minutes,
Awaiting the pleasure
Of the man
Who saves his own time
At the expense of another's.
If he is not so patient
He hangs up the receiver
With a bang,
And 'mutters something
Under his breath
That might be
"Don't you tell,"
But isn't.



THE DANCER

AS we watch her
Lithely swaying
Through the mazes of the dance,
Each pose
And each movement
One of infinite grace
In unison with the music,
Do we realize
The training and the practice
That has thus
Made her proficient.
Her skill
Creates the illusion
That she is dancing
Her dance
For the first time.
Whereas it is constant repetition
That gives her work
Its perfect spontaneity.
She charms the eye
And the mind alike
With the marvels of her art.

THE EUPHEMISTS

WITH mincing words,
They make the good
Old English language into
A Miss Nancyish tongue.
If somebody dies
He "passes away,"
They walk on "limbs,"
They "expectorate,"
They "masticate" their food,
And when
They go to bed,
Where it is a pity
They cannot stay forever,
They "retire."

THE NAME MISPRONOUNCER

IF your name
Is Smith
Or Brown or Jones,
He may get it right,
But if you happen
To be favored
By the gods
With an uncommon name,
He never fails
To misspell
And mispronounce it,
Rejoicing in
His competence
As a bungler,
And considering it
Your fault
That you do not
Bear a name
To match
His lingual ability.



THE BIRD-CATCHER

POOR puss!
Maligned and persecuted
Because she fulfills
Her instincts
And pursues with intent to kill
The birds of field and air.
Statisticians present
Formidable tables
Revealing the extent of her crimes,
And the millions of insects
That are allowed to go unmolested
Because she has murdered
Their natural enemies.
But man also
Kills birds for food and sport.
Why not also malign
And persecute him?

THE SWEET YOUNG THING

FUR-COATED
And be-gaitered
She airily hobbles along
Upon her shaky heels.
By art and fashion
She is defended from the cold
Except at one conspicuous
And vulnerable spot,
Where not less than three inches
Of reticulated silken hose
Expose her to the searching gaze
Of all the winds that blow.
Yet she is a sweet young thing,
And walks in all the pride
Of joyous youth,
And cares not
For that bare
And inconsistent gap
Between her shoe-tops
And her skirt.

THE DEAR OLD THING

A MOST delectable sight is she,
As arrayed in all
The blithesome garmenture of youth,
A hat of rakish tilt
Atop her head,
With coat and skirt
Of negligible length,
And shoes lower than the lowest,
She mincingly makes her way
Before the eyes
Of all the world.
She fancies that
The years have passed her by,
And that clothes can
Make her young again.
How fortunate it is
That she cannot see herself
As others see her.

THE ANGLERS

IS it literary sacrilege,
When we read
Izaak Walton's remark
That "God never did
Make a more calm,
Quiet, innocent recreation
Than angling,"
To wonder
What the fish thinks
About its calmness,
Quietude,
And innocence?

THE DANGER SIGNAL

“**B**AD Curve Ahead,”
“Look out for School Children,”
“Dangerous Corner,”
And so forth, and so forth,
Are the foolish signs
That confront the motorist
As he makes his way
Through town and country.
Of what use are they?
If he can see the signs,
Cannot he also see
The curves, the children,
And the other dangers
In his path?



THE JACK IN-OFFICE

FROM his desk
Arrogantly
He lifts his head.
And as each visitor
Meekly approaches
He gazes at the intruder
And with the voice
Of one who sits
In the official seats of the mighty
Bids him state
His business
As though he were master
And not a public servant.
From his mien
It might be thought
That God
Had placed him there.
But it was only man
Who thus exalted him.

THE ENCYCLOPAEDISTS

SOMETIMES it seems
As if the makers
Of encyclopædias
Take pleasure
In building a thorny path
For information-seekers.
Whenever, perchance,
As in the case of Mark Twain,
A writer is known solely
By his pen-name,
We look him up thereunder,
Only to be informed,
What we already knew,
That this name
Is a pseudonym,
And that we must seek him
Under his family name
In another volume.
Whereupon we waste
Still further time
In cursing
These punctilious encyclopædists.

THE TELEPHONE JARGONIST

WHY insult
The good English language
Still further
By using
The telephone jargon
In our daily speech?
It is bad enough
To vocalize
Through the transmitter
A cipher as if it
Were the letter O,
But when
We pronounce it
One—O—O—NINE,
Instead of
One Thousand and Nine,
We are adding
Injury to insult.



POOR RICHARD

A LAS for Ben Franklin!
What a parlous life
He must have led
In those awful times
When the forty-four hour week
For printers was unknown
And unprophesied.
Yet he survived his labors
For no less than
Eighty-four years
And has grown in fame
So mightily
That after a lapse
Of more than two centuries
His statue
Has been dragged
Through our streets
To make a Boston holiday.

THE SACRIFICIAL TEACHERS

THEIR service
To mankind
Is no greater
And their reward no less
Than that
Of many another
Man or woman
Who works for a living.
Why then
Do these teachers
Set themselves up
As martyrs
And brag about
The great sacrifice
They are making
As they pursue
Their calling
In the intervals
Of its numerous vacations.

THE MODERN LADY NOVELIST

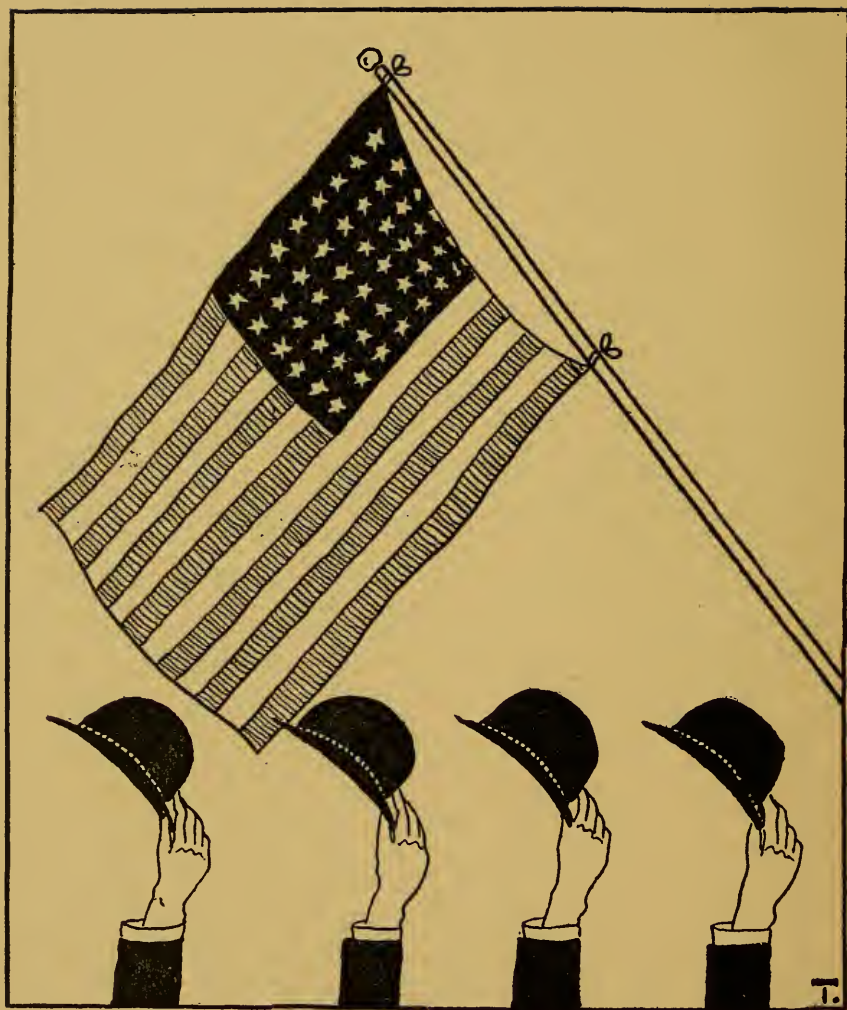
HAVE any of you
Noted the get-up
Of the lady novelists
Who pose
For the photographer
In response to the plea
Of their publishers
That their likenesses
Must be in readiness
To spread broadcast
Throughout the newspapers
Of the country?
They are arrayed,
Or unarrayed,
In costumes
That would put to shame
The most garbless appeal
Of the many fair charmers
Who decorate
The Follies
Or the latest masterpiece
Of musical comedy.

THE MUFFLER CUT-OUTER

HIS idea
Of joyous riding
Is to make a racket,
And the easiest way
Is to open
His muffler cut-out.
Through city and country
He speeds,
And whenever he reaches
An especially quiet spot,
He shatters the offenseless air
And the ears
Of all within his reach.
After his passing
Comes a grateful silence
To heal the blows of sound.

THE BELL IN-HAND

NOW are its glories departed!
After a century and a quarter
Of sober ale and sandwiches
The good old Bell-in-Hand
Opened its doors
For a time
To multitudes drunk
With the clamorous spirit
Of Ponzied finance,
And later
To the base
And sordid purposes
Of a counting room
For a firm
Which is erecting
A building
Across the alley.



THE HEAD-UNCOVERER

WE must show respect
For the flag,
We are told,
By uncovering our heads
When it is
Carried by us
In procession.
But this, of course,
Is the most meaningless
And trivial
Outward show
Of patriotism,
For many a hat
Is doffed only because
Its wearer
Dislikes
To make himself
Conspicuous
By refusing to follow
Custom or the crowd.

THE SLANGSTERS

WITH their "dope"
And their "phone,"
Their "cut it out,"
And their "bunk,"
Their "get my goat"
And a thousand
Other vilenesses
Of speech,
Those who are supposed
To speak
The English language
Seem to think
That slang
Is the only means
For the expression
Of their ideas.
And perhaps it is,
For those who use it
May have no ideas
That can be voiced
Otherwise.

THE FASHIONABLE ONE

WITH shoulder sleeves,
Knee skirts,
Reticulated hosiery,
And gauzy corsage
That rises a few inches
Above the waist-line —
These may not be
The technical terms,
But they are
Certainly understandable —
She braves the summer heat,
And presumably is happy,
Not because
She is cool,
But because
She is fashionable.



THUS SPAKE THE PROPHET ISAIAH

IN this
Enlightened time
When a new commandment,
Thou shalt not drink,
Is to be thrust upon us,
Why not turn back
The pages of time
And in Holy Scripture
Read these words?
“In that day sing ye unto her,
A vineyard of red wine.
I the Lord do keep it,
I will water it every moment:
Lest any hurt it.
I will keep it night and day.”
Thus spake
The prophet Isaiah.

THE DEGREE-HOLDER

HIS pride
Is so immoderate
That he must share
His glory
With all the world.
If by chance he wins
An A. B. or an A. M.,
Or perhaps a Ph. D.,
He hastens to decorate
His stationery
With the cabalistic letters
That disclose his scholarship.
And sometimes
He even thinks
It increases his celebrity
If he adds them
As a sort of anti-climax
To his written signature.

THE WEATHER OPTIMIST

HE does not permit
His spirit to be troubled
By excessive heat
Although the perspiration
Bedecks his fevered brow.
He wears a cheerful smile,
And says to all
Who growl and grumble
That they would be
As comfortable as he
If they worried not
And took the weather
As they found it.
In summer or in winter
It pays to be
The cheerful optimist.

THE HEART GLADDENER

THERE was a wise man
In days of old
Named David,
And thus he spake:
He causeth the grass
To grow for the cattle,
And herb for the service
Of man,
That he may bring forth
Food out of the earth;
And wine
That maketh glad
The heart of man,
And oil
To make his face to shine,
And bread
Which strengtheneth man's heart.

THE HOPE CHESTER

AND now
The latest fad
Of the Hope-Chester
Is to lay aside
A selection of books
Against a happy day.
An editorial in
The Woman's Home Companion
Proclaims this mighty thought:
"How a table-cloth
And a dozen napkins
Shrink into nothingness
Compared with that splendid
Practical edition
Of Shakespeare,
Or Kipling or Stevenson."
But why in Heaven's name
Not purchase
A table-cloth
And at least one napkin
That will not shrink
Into nothingness?



THE VEILER

SHE may be
So impressed
By her own facial charms
That she must hide
Them from the gaze
Of the multitude,
But she might
Be considerate enough
To realize the strain
Upon those helpless victims
Of hers
Who must needs
Sit and talk to her
Through the meshes
Of huge dots
And other
Geometrical figures
That adorn her veil.
If she has no pity
Upon her own eyes,
She might have
A little regard
For the eyes of others.

THE WINDOW BRAGGERS

HUMANITARIANISM

And patriotism
Seem to be with them
A means
For self-advertisement.
They give their cash
To the Red Cross
And then they hang
A sign in their window
That the whole world
May know
The exact amount
Of their philanthropy
In dollars and cents.

THE TIT FOR TATTER

IF childless John
Must pay taxes
To send
His neighbor Jim's children
To school,
Why should not
Automobileless Jim
Pay taxes
To build good roads
For John's motor car
To run upon?



THE FEMALE FORM DIVINE

WHITHER have disappeared
The feminine ears,
And whence is disappearing
The feminine forehead?
To judge by
The present mode
Of hair array,
Or disarray,
One might think
There is
Something shameful
In the exposure
Of those necessary
And once thought
Ornamental features
Of the female form divine.

A RE-MADE MAN

NOW that this portion
Of the world
Is laboring under
The blessings
Of prohibition,
We are given all sorts
Of serio-comic testimonials
Upon the wonders
It has performed.
One wife, so it is said,
Reports that now she has
A one hundred per cent husband.
But
If it takes prohibition,
Or anything else
To make a man
Of a man
Is he worth
The making of a man?
Would he not be
Better dead?

IN THE DAYS OF THE APOSTLE

THEY knew not
Prohibition in the days
When Paul the Apostle
Wrote these words of wisdom
In his First Epistle
To Timothy:
Drink no longer water
But use a little wine
For thy stomach's sake
And thine often infirmities.

THE BREEZY ONE

HE blows in upon you
And with a glad hand
Takes it for granted
That you will welcome him
With another hand of gladness.
No amount of icy coldness
Or of snubbing
Will repress him
And he comes again
And again
Each time breezier than before.
And sometimes,
May we add,
All this might be written
With pronouns
Of feminine gender.

THE BLEST AND THE CURST

O WEATHER!
Thou art immortal.
Sometimes
We bless thee
But more frequently
We curse thee
And always
When we have
Nothing else
To talk
Or write about
We mention thee.
And here
In this most wonderful
Climate,
Thou givest us
Perpetually
The opportunity
To say something
Which if not new
And original
Is at least emphatic.



THE SPIRIT-SEEKER

NONE of us need lack
Knowledge of the life to come,
If we are content
To seek the light
In the pages of books
That record
The rappings and the tappings
And all the other
Mysterious outbreaks
Revealed at spiritualistic seances
Or psychical manifestations.
Books on this
And kindred subjects
Are coming profusely
From the press
That he who runs may read,
But not necessarily
That he who reads
Must believe.

THE SNAP THE-CURTAIN FIEND

COMFORTABLY seated
Next the window
As he journeys
To and fro by train,
He is not content
To raise
The curtain gently.
Instead, when he desires
More light to penetrate
His mental crevices,
He pulls it sharply up,
And with a bang
Jolts the nerves
Of all not hardened
Like his own.

THE CONFERER

WHEN you go
To call upon
A man of great importance,
You may be told
Quite simply
That he is engaged
And that he will
See you
In a few moments.
But if he is
A man of small calibre
You are certain
To be informed
That he is "in conference"
And cannot be disturbed.

JOHN DRINKWATER

IN these sad days,
John Drinkwater,
You are the happy possessor
Of a happy name.
No wonder
You have come across the ocean
At this moment
To test your fame
As dramatist and poet
Among the people
Who must henceforth,
Unless perchance
They have thriftily
Taken time by the forelock,
Drink nothing
But water.
All hail to thee,
John Drinkwater.



AT THE TICKET WINDOW

ALL the time
In the world
Is hers.
She lines herself up
At the ticket window,
Opens her bag,
Takes out her purse,
Closes the bag,
Opens her purse,
Extracts her money,
Is handed her change,
Picks it up
Piece by piece,
Lays aside the coin
With which
To pay her fare,
Places the rest
In her purse,
Closes it,
Opens her bag,
Etc., etc., etc.,
And then departs
Contentedly
And remorselessly.

THE BOOK WRITERS

WHEN we hear
The frequently
Repeated invocation
"Oh, that mine enemy
Would write a book,"
We cannot refrain
From thinking
It would be far better
To say,
"Oh, that my friends
Would write
No more books."

THE KNEES-IN-YOUR-BACKMAN

AS he plumps himself down
He reposes comfortably
As if there were
No one else in the car.
His backbone
He uses as a throne,
And with his knees
Firmly thrust into
The yielding plush of the seat
In front of him,
He wears the air
Of a man
Oblivious to his surroundings
And perfectly at peace
With all the world.
And if by chance
He has a newspaper in his hands
To thrust into the neck
Of his frontal neighbor,
His contentment is supreme.

THE LICK CREATION AMERICAN

TO hear some people talk
We might think that America
And America alone
Won the war,
And that none but Americans
Should be put on guard
To determine Germany's fate.
But fortunately
A few of us
Have long memories
And do not forget that while
Belgium and France,
Britain and Italy,
Held the bridge,
America stood
With reluctant and faltering feet,
And the valor of other nations
Was the world's salvation.
Therefore America's voice
At the present crisis
Should be small and still.



THE MORALIST

THE time may come,
With all other
Subjects exhausted,
When the Reverend
John Roach Straton,
Arbiter of the morals
Of this free
And enlightened republic,
Will venture upon
A debate over
The horrors of fiction
From Boccaccio
And Rabelais
To Theodore Dreiser
And James Branch Cabell.

THE FIRST OF APRIL

ONCE upon a time
An ingenious man
Sought to benefit humanity
By extracting sunbeams
From cucumbers.
But nowadays
Our modern reformers
Seek other means
To circumvent nature,
And strive to make two hours
Grow where only one
Grew before.
They pass a law
Commanding us to set
The hands of our watches
And our clocks
One hour forward,
And they proclaim that
The hours of daylight
Are thereby increased!
Fittingly indeed
Did this new chronology
Have its birth upon
The eve of
The First of April!

THE UPLIFTER

HE goes about
With serene smile
His Pollyanna way.
He is a friend of everybody,
An enemy of none,
And he claims that life
Should be one grand
And glorious song
Of luscious love.
His goodness is too cloying,
And when he leaves us
The reaction is so great
That there is but one word
To utter, and that is
Bosh!

THE IDEALIST

WE have it
On the authority
Of Henry Ford
That history
Is "bunk,"
And that the world
Would be better
Without music
Or any of the arts.
And yet
In the face of this,
He is called
An idealist!

THE PHRASE-MAKER

THESE are great days
Of great deeds
And great words
And great phrases.
The student
Of stenography
And typewriting
Now attends
A School
Of Secretarial Science,
And the doors
Of a College of
Business Administration
Now swing wide open
To admit him, or her,
Who once
Would have attended
Only a humble
Commercial College.



WALT WHITMAN

ONE hundred years ago
This coming week
Was born Walt Whitman,
Most picturesque of poets.
He stands distinctive
And above them all,
Not as great perhaps
As the greatest,
But what is sometimes
Better than greatness,
Individual and unique.
He made his way
And now he stands
With none beside him,
Impressive and alone,
A giant.

THE ENCORE FIEND

HE —

And sometimes it is she —
Is always certain to be there,

At opera

Or musical comedy.

“ They’re not going

To be let off as easily as all that,”

He — or she —

Exclaims even when

The performers are breathless,

And with vociferous hands

He — or she — demands

And re-demands

A repetition of song or dance.

No matter whether

All are weary,

Both those on the stage

And those in the audience,

His — or her — selfish demands

Must be obeyed,

Or the thunderous clamor

Will continue.

When will arise

A stage director

Or an orchestra leader

Who will have the courage

Utterly to ignore,

Or if that does not suffice,

To repress with vigorous words,

Such hoggish procedure?

THE GAME

ALL the world
May be a stage
And all the men and women
Merely players,
But this life
And its interests
Are not the "game"
That it is proclaimed
To be by the slangsters.
We may write for a living,
But we are not
In the "writing game,"
We may be lawyers,
But we are not
In the "legal game,"
We may be doctors,
But we are not
In the "medical game,"
And so forth,
And so forth.



THE DAYS COME

IT is written
By Amos in the Old Testament:
"Behold, the days come,
Saith the Lord,
That the plowman shall overtake
The reaper,
And the treader of grapes
Him that soweth seed;
And the mountains shall drop
Sweet wine,
And all the hills shall melt,
And I will bring again the captivity
Of my people of Israel,
And they shall build the waste cities,
And inhabit them;
And they shall plant vineyards,
And drink the wine thereof;
They shall also make gardens,
And eat the fruit of them.
And I will plant them upon their land,
And they shall no more be pulled up
Out of their land
Which I have given them,
Saith the Lord thy God."
Thus it is written
With true prophetic hand
By Amos in the Old Testament.

THE MUSIC HUMMER

WHEN he — or she —
Who at opera grand or comic,
At musical comedy,
During the orchestral joys
Of theatre entr'actes,
Or at any other
Of the fifty-seven
Varieties of harmony and melody,
Seeks to add
To the gayety of the audience
By a sub-vocal humming,
Or a mumbling or a rumbling,
He — or she —
Is merely tolerated
Upon this earth
By those whose
Kindliness of heart
Alone prevents
His — or her — instant slaughter.

THE STILT-HEEL GIRL

GINGERLY she picks her way
Along the crowded walks,
Hobblingly she totters
Upon her toes
While high above
Follow her heels
Supported by
Their fragile stilts.
What matters it
That every muscle aches,
That ankles twist and turn,
That all her bones seem broken?
She looks about herself
With all the calm assurance
Of a happy and contented mind,
For is she not in style?



THE OVERSHOE FLAPPERS

WITH bare necks above
And unbuckled
And dishevelled
Overshoes below,
They parade the streets
These wintry days
As if they had
No purpose
In life
But to show
The extremes
Of feminine
Mental aberration.

THE PROHIBITION NICOTINIST

HE loves
His nicotine.
With smoking pipe,
Or burning cigar,
Or even with
The incense-laden cigarette
In mouth
He denounces
In most eloquent language
The ills that alcohol
Has caused humanity
To endure.
He laments upon the folly
Of its use,
And most of all
He proclaims
Its economic waste,
Welcoming the glad hour
When prohibition rules the land.
He is the guardian
Of his brother's vice,
But he claims
The sole right
To be the keeper
Of his own.

THE SWEATER

SHE would
Not dream of saying
Anything more direct
Then "I perspire,"
If she dared
Mention at all
The effect
Of summer weather,
But she does
Not hesitate to call
An article
Of wearing apparel
A sweater.

THE NEWSPAPER CRUMPLER

HE invariably occupies
More than half
The seat
As he journeys into town
Or homeward bound.
Deep in his favorite
Daily newspaper,
Usually of the most jaundiced
Yellow brand,
He spreads it forward
And with both arms sideways,
Oblivious to humanity about him
And when
He reaches his stopping place
He crumples it noisily
And hastily,
Throwing it to the floor
And rushing forth
To seek the eagerly expectant
Bosom of his family.

THE NEW BONIFACE

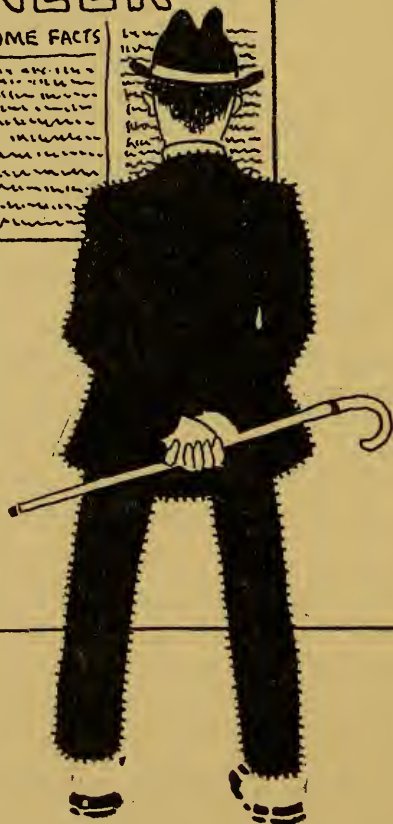
A FORWARD-LOOKING university
Has just added
To its curriculum
A course of instruction
In hotel-keeping.
Let us hope
That the landlord
Of the future
May be taught
The means whereby
Those of us who do not happen
To be multi-millionaires
May pass
Our summer vacations
At mountains or seashore
Without the complete wreck
Of our bank accounts.



**DON'T -
GET -
HURT !
WEEK .**

SOME FACTS

[The following text is represented by wavy lines, indicating illegible or scribbled-out content.]



THE ACCIDENT PREVENTERS

LET us be careful,
For this,
So we are informed
In the elegant English
Of multitudinous posters,
Is "Don't Get Hurt Week."
It matters not
What has happened,
Or what is to happen
In the days to come.
If we are careful
This week,
We shall have done
Our duty
To those reformers
Who are always looking
For some new fad
Wherewith to humbug
The public.

THE THEATRE LAUGHER

SHE always sits
Behind you,
And with prophetic glee
Anticipates the comic scenes
And speeches, and many
Not comic,
With a screech
Of shrilling laughter.
Nothing escapes
Her vigilant voice,
And if the din
Grows unbearable
And you humbly turn around
And venture to expostulate,
Her escort calmly
Makes a duet of the solo
And throughout
The rest of the evening
Adds audible remarks
To his companion's shrieks.
Therefore the rest is silence
Or a change of seat.

THEIR GOAL

IN the Book of Numbers
We may read:
"And from thence
They went to Beer."
And also later
In the Book of Judges
It is related that
"Jotham ran away
And fled,
And went to Beer."
Only these two times
Is that delectable
Beverage
Mentioned in
The Book of Books.



THE CLOCK-CHANGERS

DESPITE the claims
To the contrary
Made by the devotees
Of clock-changing,
There are this week
Exactly the same number
Of hours of daylight
In every twenty-four
As there were a week ago,
Before the hands
Were set ahead.
In other words,
No daylight was saved then,
And none is lost now.

THE REACTIONARY

WE hear a great deal
About him nowadays,
And to judge
By the wrath he arouses
In the minds of writers
For certain papers
It might be imagined
That he wears horns.
As a matter of fact,
He is simply the man
Or the woman
Who in times past
Was known by
The ancient
And honorable word
Conservative.

THE EGOTIST

“If I,”
“I beg,”
“I myself feel,”
“I am under,”
“I was
The Commander in Chief,”
“I advised,”
“I sent,”
“Shall I,”
“Can I,”
“I gave”—
Thus spake
The great American egotist,
And the noble
Master of English speech
Who strove — and failed —
To keep us out of war.

THE HAT REMOVERS

IF perchance
A lady is present
They stand in room
Or hallway
Hat on head.
But the instant
They enter an elevator
They remove it.
Why?

THE GARDENER

HE toils morning and evening
Over his crops,
Beheading the arrogant weed
And chasing the elusive insect
Which threaten to despoil him
Of his products.
By night in dreams,
By day at his desk,
His thoughts dwell
Upon the harvest to come.
Great is his anticipation,
And sometimes small
His realization,
But he is always happy,
And he never regrets
That the time he has spent
In his garden
Might have been passed
At golf,
In motoring,
Or in the broad Atlantic surf.



THE FUR-WEARER

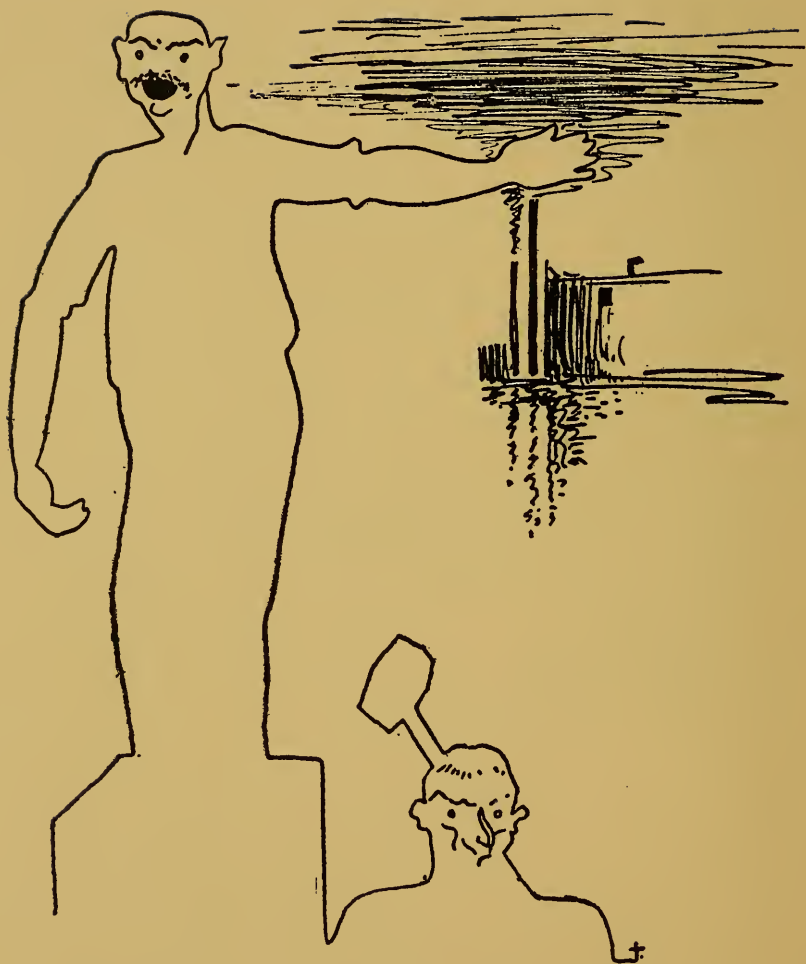
SHE is an adept
At making extremes meet
These summer days.
She wears a low bodice,
Exactly how low
We hesitate to say,
And then she swathes
In furs her neck
And the regions
Adjacent thereto.
The reasons for
This strange procedure
Are known
Only to the feminine mind,
Although of course
There may be
A fashionable method
In her madness.

THE SUDDEN STOPPER

HE walks
Along the sidewalk
At a brisk pace,
And then he suddenly
And without warning
Stops dead in his tracks,
While we, poor mortals,
Following behind
Are brought up
Against his bulk
With a thud.
It is a pity that we
Cannot annihilate him,
Instead of being
Ourselves
Almost annihilated.

THE PLAYGOER

WHETHER it be
The Follies
Or a Shaw play,
Whether Eddie Cantor
Be the star
Or Walter Hampden,
To many
Whose speech and manner
Proclaim that they
Should know better
Everything on the stage
Is a "show."
If the American public
Had a more discriminating
Sense of the meaning
Of words,
It might have
A more discriminating taste.



THE LABORERS

WHY do they
At their conventions
And individually
Talk as if
They are the only men
Or women
Who work for a living?
Why do they speak
Of the cause
Of labor,
Of the interests
Of labor,
Of the rights
Of labor
As if none but they
Do an honest day's work
For an honest day's pay?
The truth
Of the matter
Is that they mean
Only the cause,
The interests
And the rights
Of the labor unions.

THE CHRISTMAS SHOPPER

LATE and early,
Morning and afternoon,
With cheerful face
He goes upon his mission.
What matters it
When he shops,
Whether he buys something useful
Or useless,
Whether he carries his purchases
Or has them sent,
Or whether he throws
To the winds
All the rules
That confront him
On his journey to and fro?
He is a Christmas shopper,
And the joys of the Christmas Tree
Will justify his deeds.

HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER

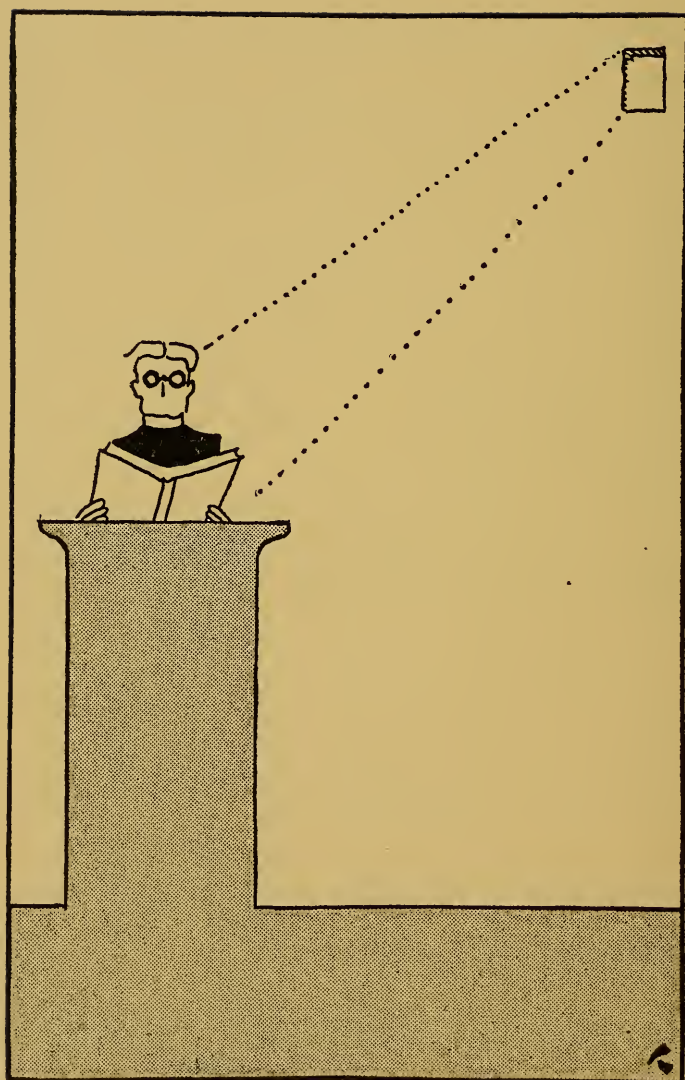
HIS impudence
Is unbounded,
For he is never happy
Unless
He is putting the houses
Of other people in order.
No matter what his own whims,
His own vices or his own sins
May be,
He thinks it his duty
Not merely to denounce
But also by law to interfere with
The customs of others.
If he confined himself
To talk,
He might be tolerated,
But he transcends
The bounds of reason
And of justice
When he seeks
The constitutional amendment
Of habits that do not happen
To be his own.

THE INSIGNIAC

LET no one be so foolish
As to imagine
That the number
Or the varied colors
Of the stripes upon his arm,
Gold or silver,
Red or white,
Blue or yellow,
Green or purple,
Measure his valor
Or his achievement.
He who wears
His heart
Upon his sleeve
Is not necessarily
He whose deeds
Are greatest.

THE SIDEWALK BLOCKERS

OBLIVIOUS they stand,
Deep in conversation
That apparently is settling
The destinies of all the world.
Blocking the way,
They neither see nor feel
The flowing tide of passers-by
Which breaks around them.
As they remain unmoved
And unperturbed,
They might as well
Inhabit a world
That contains themselves alone
For all they are aware
Of the presence of their humankind.



THE CENSOR

THESE are indeed
Sad, sad days.
One Thomas Shallcross,
An estimable member
Of the Philadelphia
Board of Education,
Has just declared that
Stevenson's "Treasure Island"
Is not fit
To be read by schoolboys.
And why?
Because it is
"Full of stories of pirates
Who ought to be hanged."
It is therefore our privilege
And our pleasure
To nominate the estimable Shallcross
For admission to the gallery
Of the righteous
Where dwells
The immortal Podsnap.

THE FOOT-TAPPER

HE is not content
To enjoy the rhythm
Of the music,
But he must spoil
Others' pleasure
By reënforcing
Its recurrent accent
With foot-taps on the floor.
A theatre-seat
Is no place for him.
He should be
An electric welder,
Or perchance a thumper
Of the big bass drum.

THE SLOW-COACH

EVERYONE with an ounce
Of energy in his composition
Hates to overtake
The slow-coach
As he pursues his leisurely course
Along the sidewalk.
He moves as if
Life were not worth the living
And he persistently
Blocks the way
By getting directly
In front of those who have
Something more to do
Than to dog his footsteps.
With lifelessness
In all his movements
He might be better dead.



THE CONQUERING HERO

HOME the conquering hero comes
Still firm in the belief
That he and he alone
Is settling the fate of the world.
But others remain behind
Who have not sought
Peace without victory,
Who did not say that
The aims of both sides
During the war were the same,
And doubtless in his absence
They will make such progress
That what should have been done
Weeks ago
Will be accomplished
Long before his threatened return.
In the meantime, however,
The cabled propaganda will continue,
And we shall be fed up
With the customary reports
That everything done
Is done by him
And him alone.

THE ANIMAL RESCUER

HIS is the eye
That looks
Beyond the mere needs
Of his humankind.
His is the mind
That knows
The souls and bodies
Of his animal friends
Deserve no less care and kindness
Than he bestows upon his fellow men.
His is the hand
That caresses them,
And the voice
That soothes them,
And his the task and duty
To make the world
A better place
For mankind to live in
Because he also makes it
A happier dwelling-place
For dumb animals.



THE HOSPITAL TELEPHONIST

HER manner is brusque,
Her voice is strident,
Her messages are curt
To all who venturesomely
Infringe upon her valuable time
Either over the telephone
Or by personal application
At her desk.

"He's gettin' along orl light,"

"There ain't no change since yisterday,"

"Ye-ur,"

"Naw,"

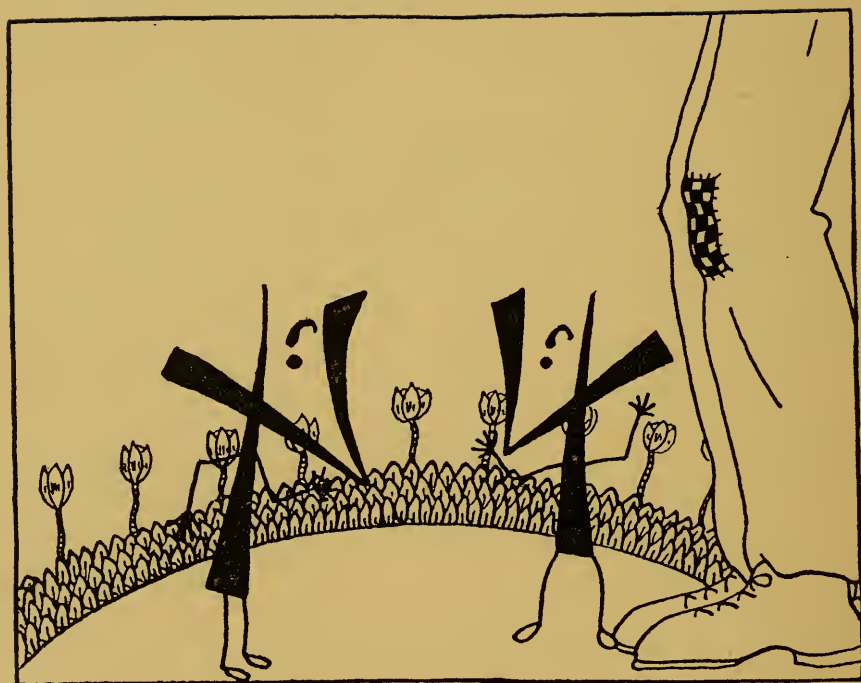
These words seem to be
The limitations
Of her vocabulary.

GOOD OLD JOEL

A WISE man in his day
Was Joel
When he wrote:
The mountains
Shall drop down
New wine,
And the hills shall flow
With milk,
And all the rivers
Of Judah shall flow
With water.
What a pity
There was neither
Ale nor beer
In Joel's day
That he might
Sing its praises.

THE CONVERSATION CIRCLER

THE bell rings
And she picks up
The receiver,
While the unwilling victim
Who by a sad fate
Is compelled
To remain in the room
Listens to a conversation
Of never-ending length.
She talks and talks,
And after a minute
She continues
To say the same thing
Over and over again
In different words,
Going round and round
A conversational circle
That seems to be
As long as the girdle
That Puck put round about
The Earth
In forty minutes.



A DREADFUL LIAR

SAID one four o'clock
To another four o'clock
In my neighbor's garden:
"This daylight saving
Makes me out
To be
A dreadful liar."

THE INDEPENDENT

WHEN a man
Is without
A stable mind
And his opinions shift
Like straws
With every changing
Of the wind
He calls himself
An independent
And rejoices loudly
In his own conceit.

THE BLOCK-THE-DOOR PERSONS

WHAT crowd may be
Behind them

Matters not.

If perchance

They are on the way

Out of the railway station

In the midst

Of the 'morning exodus,

They act as if

They were the only people

On earth.

They stop to chat,

Or to gaze

Up and down the street,

And if anyone

Attempts to push by them,

They glare and growl

And mutter words

About the rudeness

Of others.



THE LATE THEATRE-COMER

H^E —
It is almost invariably
He
And not she —
Who arrives at the play
Within a few moments
Of the end of the first act
And is shown to his seat
In the middle of the row,
Of course
Might wait
Until the curtain falls,
But that would avoid
The disturbance
Of a dozen or more of
His fellow beings,
And to think of others
In such an exigency
Is naturally impossible
To him.

THE EXPERT CLIPPER

WHY should we
Have any compunction
At putting asunder
What man hath joined together?
Especially the man
Who has a varied assortment
Of paper clips,
And who uses them lavishly
On all documents
He sends forth to the world.
Every time we receive
A communication from him,
We yank
The bit of twisted steel
Therefrom and vehemently
Curse him and its inventor.

THE HAUGHTY ONE

HER stare is impressive
When presiding
At newsstand
Or cigar counter
Or any other dispensary
Of necessary wares.
She haughtily condescends
To accept your money,
And declining to place the change
In your extended hand,
Calmly drops it
On the glass,
And views with glee
Your efforts to pick it up.

THE BUSINESS MINDER

LIFE insurance presidents
Are apparently setting themselves up
As the arbiters
Of feminine fashion.
Here is one of them
Who hails from Hartford
And he proclaims
That "all women
Who bob their hair
Are useless,"
And that his ideal
Of a business woman
Is "one who has had
Two or three years
Of college work,
Does not powder her nose,
Does not watch the clock,
Does not rouge her cheeks,
And does not
Smoke cigarettes."
By way of rejoinder
Perhaps we may be
Permitted to say
That our ideal
Of a life insurance president
Is one who
Minds his own masculine business.

THE KNITTERS

WHERE are they,
The multitudinous knitters
Whose needles
Were wont to flash
Before our eyes
In street car,
Railway train,
On hotel piazza,
In lecture hall,
And many another
Public place?
They were knitting
For the boys in khaki,
But is there none
To knit for in
These piping times of peace?



THE REVOLVING-DOOR INVENTOR

WHEN the lamented Gilbert,
Wisest and merriest of humorists,
Wrote in one of his liveliest moods
About the fitting
Of the punishment to the crime,
And in another vein
About a little list of victims
To be found,
He had not in mind
The revolving-door,
For it was not then
Inflicted upon
A long-suffering world.
If it had been,
He would undoubtedly
Have consigned its perpetrator
To a well-deserved
And everlasting whirligig
Of gyrations
Within its confines.

THE MANUSCRIPT ROLLER

HE may be able
To write good English,
He may be able
To spell with accuracy,
He may be a man of ideas,
And he may have a message
For the world,
But he is welcome
To no editorial haunts
If he rolls his manuscript.
Editors have some rights
That even the most
Intelligent contributors
Should be bound to respect.

THE WEATHER GROWLER

MAN and woman
Are seldom content
With the meteorological
Dispensations of the gods.
Without a murmur
They will accept much else
That comes to them,
But not the weather.
If it be hot
It should be cold.
If it be cold
It should be hot.
If it be warm,
It should be cooler.
If it be cool
It should be warmer.
And so on ad infinitum
They growl and grumble
Unceasingly
And give themselves
Much more discomfort and unhappiness
Than the weather
Ever brings to them.



OUR LEGISLATORS

OUR legislators
Are indeed
A marvellous crew,
And sometimes we wonder
Whether they are
Our masters
Or our servants.
Now comes one of them
Who hails from Mississippi
And whose name is Johnson
Who says that smoking
By women
In public
Is "worse than whiskey,"
And who therefore
Offers a bill in Congress
To fine them
If they are caught smoking
In the public places
Of Washington.
Great and wonderful indeed
Are our legislators!

THE OPEN MINDER

HE brags vociferously
That he has
What he calls
An open mind,
And that he is
Ready to be convinced
By the latest comer
On political problems
Or other subjects.
The trouble with him
Is, however,
That he has
No convictions at all,
And that his open mind
Is simply another name
For defective judgment
And lack of principle.

THE POEMLESS POET

IN the olden days
The poet wrote
Poetry
And thereby became
Famous.
But in these times
He writes
Prose
And by simply
Calling it
Free verse,
Or something
Equally indefinable,
He places himself
Or is placed by others
In the halls
Of the great.

THE HAT-PIN WOMAN

BARBAROUSLY serene
She goes about
And recks not
If the spear
Thrust through her hat
From side to side
Protrudes so far
As to encounter
Her neighbor's
Eye or ear or chin.
He may dodge it,
Or he may not,
And his the penalty
If he fails
Successfully to avoid
Its poisonous point.
Yet he must not complain
For is not her headgear
By it made safe
From all the winds that blow?

THE MODERN GLADIATOR

IN ancient days
The high and mighty
Among the multitudes
That foregathered
In the Colosseum
To make a Roman holiday
Gave the signal
“Thumbs down”
That meant death
To the vanquished.
In these modern days,
On the contrary,
The defeated gladiator
Will have his damaged body
Carefully tended
By physicians
And his injured feelings
Soothed by a liberal share
Of the spoils.

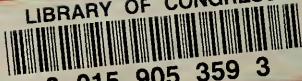


POOR OMAR

IN these days of doom
Must we
Banish Omar the Tentmaker
From our bookshelves?
If we are forbidden
To quench our thirst,
We may expect also
That the reformer's hand
Will fall upon those
Who sing the praises
Of the fragrant
And exhilarating
Juice of the grape.
Must we then
In these days of doom
Banish Omar the Tentmaker
From our bookshelves?



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